

## REGION

## Niantic Bay Boardwalk rededicated



TIM COOK/THE DAY

Dr. Joseph Legg, president of the East Lyme Public Trust Foundation, delivers remarks Saturday during the rededication and ribbon-cutting ceremony for the newly rebuilt Niantic Bay Boardwalk as an Amtrak train rumbles by.

By **KIMBERLY DRELICH**  
Day Staff Writer

**East Lyme** — With views of the water and nearby sand, residents and officials stood Saturday morning on the recently finished Niantic Bay Boardwalk to mark the completion of a project that speakers said took “perseverance and persistence.”

The rebuilding of the town’s portion of the boardwalk was finished in March, resulting in a 1.1-mile concrete

pathway overlooking Niantic Bay. Engineering firm Parsons Brinckerhoff and a local construction company, Wiese Construction, worked on the project.

“This boardwalk is truly a town- and region-wide community endeavor that shows what is possible when everyone, regardless of politics or profession, works toward one common goal,” former First Selectman and state Sen. Paul Formica,

R-East Lyme, told a crowd of about a hundred attendees.

The East Lyme Public Trust Foundation, with the East Lyme Parks and Recreation Department, sponsored the rededication ceremony for the boardwalk, which comes 11 years after the first dedication ceremony in 2005.

Construction began in 2014 to rebuild the town’s portion of the boardwalk as a concrete walkway af-

ter storms had damaged the original structure.

Though the boardwalk originally was intended to withstand a 25-year storm, the boardwalk didn’t make it through its first storm, which started “a series of conversations, critiques, repairs, lawsuits, and changes,” Formica, the keynote speaker, said.

Tropical Storm Irene and Superstorm Sandy further damaged it.

**SEE BOARDWALK PAGE D8**

## Boardwalk rededicated after storms damaged previous work

FROM D1

When Amtrak was planning to build a new Niantic River railroad bridge, negotiations ensued on how to rebuild the eastern half of the boardwalk.

Amtrak’s rebuilding of that portion as a concrete structure “set the design standard for what we will be walking on for decades to come,” Formica said.

During the ceremony, Parks and Recreation Director David Putnam said thousands of people have walked the boardwalk in the past few weeks, with hundreds of thousands expected this summer and in the future.

“It is awesome to see families, individuals and seniors taking advantage of this walkway and starting a new walking routine, and some just coming to reflect and enjoy the outstanding views of Long Island Sound,” Putnam said.

First Selectman Mark Nickerson thanked all those involved with the boardwalk

project and encouraged attendees to “enjoy the summer of Niantic Boardwalk 2016.”

Robert DeSanto, past president of the East Lyme Public Trust Foundation, shared information about the boardwalk, including that the replacement of the eastern half of the boardwalk came as Amtrak complied with the state’s environmental recommendations during the bridge replacement project.

#### Collaborative effort

Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, called the boardwalk “a perfect example of collaboration” among the nonprofit community and local, state and federal governments.

Formica said Andy Pappas and Jay Gionet came up with the idea for the boardwalk. Five different first selectmen have overseen the project and worked with the East Lyme Public Trust Foundation, “the group that stood by this project from its



TIM COOK/THE DAY

East Lyme First Selectman Mark Nickerson welcomes the audience Saturday to the rededication and ribbon-cutting ceremony for the newly renovated and fully completed Niantic Bay Boardwalk.

start to this morning.”

Pappas said the boardwalk project was an opportunity to open up access to Long Island Sound and represents “volunteerism and follow-through.”

The program noted that discussions on developing the town’s waterfront began in 1866.

“As we rededicate this dream fulfilled, we recognize that only perseverance and persistence could have achieved this result,” said John Hoye, East Lyme Public Trust Foundation vice president. “It has been a dream that has taken 150 years, from 1866 to 2016.”

“Today, all of those who helped make this project a success can say: Thank you for the dream, the dream that was once deferred, the dream that is no longer a dream, a dream that is now fulfilled,” he added.

Speakers thanked town officials and staff, members of the East Lyme Public Trust Foundation, residents, and state and federal representatives.

#### Contois honored

At the ceremony, a bench was dedicated to Jenny Contois, the district director for Courtney’s office who died last year. The dedication recognized that her “tireless efforts helped make this boardwalk a reality.”

“It’s going to be here for generations, and people can come and read the plaques and see the benches and donate plaques in honor of their loved ones,” East Lyme Public Trust Foundation President Joseph Legg said. “It’s just a wonderful achievement.”

The ceremony also featured historical displays about the boardwalk and oldies music.

Among the attendees were Christine and Tony Terracciano of Waterford and their four children, ages 5½ years to 7 weeks.

Ten years ago on Valentine’s Day, Tony had proposed to Christine on a bench at the boardwalk, after having his fifth-grade teacher install a plaque the day before that said “Tony [heart] Christine Terracciano.”

They have sponsored plaques on the boardwalk for the family and for Flanders Donut & Bake Shop, the bakery of Tony’s family.

They are frequent visitors to the boardwalk and came Saturday in memory of Tony’s father, Andrew Terracciano, who died a year ago.

“We love this boardwalk,” Tony said. “We come here as much as we can.”  
k.drelich@theday.com



# PERSPECTIVE



SEAN D. ELLIOT/THE DAY

A bulldozer moves sand being added to the beachfront along Niantic Bay in 2012 as part of the boardwalk project.

## The diverse duo who helped make the Niantic Bay Boardwalk a reality

By JUNE HOYE

On Saturday, the East Lyme Public Trust Foundation, in cooperation with The East Lyme Parks and Recreation Department, celebrated the rededication of the Niantic Bay Boardwalk. It was a long journey, with many twists, and it took the help of many people to make it a reality.

The original idea was presented in 1994 by Andy Pappas and Jay Gionet. They were soon joined by other people, five of whom have persevered from then to 2016. Bill Rinoski and his wife Fran agreed to

June Hoyer is a member of the trust foundation and served on the organizing committee for Saturday's dedication.

Many will enjoy the beautiful shoreline walk because of bipartisan leadership and the dedication of many volunteers.

handle the advertising, sale, and installation of the plaques that line the Boardwalk. Betty Purvis, Pat Lewis and Jack Lewis have been active members of the trust for 22 years.

However, the person who has been the guiding star for this group has been its first president, Bob DeSanto, who became involved at the beginning of the project and served as president during the first dedication. DeSanto remained president until 2014, and has continued to contribute in his status as past president.

DeSanto jokes that he invested

his retirement in this project, along with his marital tranquility. There is no aspect of the project that does not bear his effort and time. He was instrumental in dealing with Amtrak, with the town, and with our members. He researched and guided the installation of the original educational signs and now the reinstalled educational signs. It was his vision that researched and got installed the cameras to protect the Boardwalk. He handled the details for the building of the first monument and now the replacement monument.

In 2004, my husband, John Hoyer, joined DeSanto on the trust board as vice president. Its been an improbable partnership — DeSanto, a Republican, introvert, and detail-oriented; and Hoyer, a Democrat, extrovert, and a people-person.

It somehow worked well.

Being retired, DeSanto, a Ph.D. biologist, and Hoyer, a former state representative of East Lyme, were willing and able to devote the significant time that this project required. This was truly a non-political collaboration, contributing to its success. Over the years they worked with Republican town administrations and Democratic lawmakers, including U.S. Rep. Sam Gejdenson and Sen. Joe Lieberman.

Throughout the many crises which the group faced — includ-

SEE NIAN TIC PAGE B6

Sunday, May 29, 2016

## Niantic boardwalk project complete

FROM B3

ing storms that repeatedly damaged the walk — DeSanto never faltered. He slowly kept moving forward, never considering failure to be an option. This was a goal, he said, that he was determined to complete.

Hoyer, too, said he was never tempted to give up, though he does recall the anger he felt at realizing that the original Boardwalk had been constructed with an inferior design and inferior materials.

That is all past. The project has been seen to completion.

This is a dream fulfilled. celebrates the beauty of nature, is a testament to the persistence of the human spirit, and a reality because of the many volunteers who contributed their efforts.

Come and enjoy it.

www.publictrustfoundation.org